



Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning
4000 Collins Road P.O. Box 30633 Lansing, MI 48909-8133
(517) 336-6477
www.michigan.gov/ohsp

March 29, 2007

Contact: Anne Readett
(517) 333-5317

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE'S TRAFFIC DEATHS DECLINE FOR FOURTH YEAR

Traffic injuries fell 9 percent in 2006

Overall, Michigan fared well in 2006 when traffic fatalities, crashes and injuries fell to levels last seen during World War II, according to figures from the Michigan State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center.

A sizable decrease came in traffic-related injuries, which fell 9 percent, from 90,510 in 2005 to 81,942 in 2006. Deaths fell 4 percent, from 1,129 in 2005 to 1,084 in 2006. Total crashes declined almost 10 percent, from 350,838 in 2005 to 315,322 in 2006.

However, for the first time in six years, alcohol and/or drug-related traffic deaths rose from 408 in 2005 to 440 in 2006, a jump of almost 8 percent. That represents just over 40 percent of all traffic deaths. Michigan has not experienced an alcohol/drug involved percentage in traffic deaths that high in more than 10 years.

Some of the increase can be attributed to a rise in drug-impaired involvement in crashes, which rose 16 percent in 2006. Michigan's .08 drunk driving law allows motorists who are impaired by illegal drugs to be charged under the intoxicated driving statutes. As a result, officers are more frequently requesting blood tests to detect the presence of illegal drugs, which may be leading to a more accurate picture of alcohol and drug involvement in traffic crashes.

"Michigan has been enhancing programs aimed at reducing drunk and impaired driving," stated Michael L. Prince, director of the Office of Highway Safety Planning. "This includes improving the state's forensic analysis capabilities in drunk/drug-impaired driving cases, utilizing state-of-the-art technology to allow toxicologists to testify via closed-circuit video to avoid excessive travel time, improving training opportunities for the criminal justice community and piloting a Fatal Alcohol Crash Team program in Genesee County."

A more thorough data review is in progress regarding the increase in alcohol and/or drug-involved traffic deaths, Prince said.

The decrease in deaths and injuries is due in part to Michigan's record-high safety belt use rate. The current use rate of 94.3 percent is second highest in the nation. Other factors also credited include improvements in road design and intersections, as well as continuing vehicle safety improvements such as air bags, anti-lock brakes and electronic stability control.

The crash data also shows:

- Motorcycle crashes decreased, from 3,504 in 2005 to 3,296 in 2006. The number of motorcyclists killed fell approximately 7 percent, from 122 in 2005 to 114 in 2006.
- Commercial motor vehicle crashes fell nearly 16 percent, from 15,635 in 2005 to 13,059 in 2006.
- Deer-vehicle crashes rose about 4 percent, from 58,741 in 2005 to 60,875 in 2006. There were 12 people killed in deer-vehicle crashes in 2006, up from 9 in 2005.

- 30 -

NEWS RELEASE
TRAFFIC SAFETY